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President: Mr. Drobnjak (Vice-President) ..... (Croatia)
later: Mr. Oh Joon (Vice-President) ..... (Republic of Korea)

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In the absence of Mr. Sajdik (Austria), Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Thematic discussion on the theme "Strengthening and building institutions for policy integration in the post-2015 era" (E/2015/69)

1. **The President** said that the theme chosen for the thematic discussion reflected the importance of institutions in the transition towards a new development framework based on the sustainable development goals. Effective institutions were both enablers and outcomes of development; they not only had an essential role to play in the development of policies and practices, the coordination of activities and the mobilization of people and resources, but also embodied the values and vision of their societies. To fulfil the vision for the post-2015 era, institutions must be able to manage complex challenges, competing development objectives and a wide variety of coherent actions at all levels of governance. Implementing the coherent, integrated and mutually reinforcing approaches that would be needed across sectors, governance levels and systems to support those efforts would require overcoming considerable constraints at the operational, political and capacity levels.

2. Although institutions would be instrumental in realizing the transformative vision of the post-2015 development agenda, they would have to adapt to the realities of the post-2015 era in order to remain relevant and effective. They must become multi-disciplinary, participatory, collaborative, adaptable and capable of working across organizational boundaries in order to draw on a broader base of knowledge, skills and resources. Institutional transformation would require a fundamental shift in mindset and attitudes driven by strong leadership, a clear vision, government ownership, good communication and effective capacity-building. Ambition and innovation would be keys to overcoming the challenges posed by the vast scope of the new development agenda.

3. **Mr. El-Keib** (former Interim Prime Minister of Libya and Member of Club de Madrid), delivering the keynote address, said that Member States had a historical destiny to usher in a new era for development and should be conscious of the view that history would take of any failure to fully grasp that opportunity. The Club de Madrid was a network of over 100 democratically elected former Heads of State and Government who were working to build and strengthen institutions in order to promote policy integration in the post-2015 era. A "shared society", based on social inclusion and inclusive institutions, was a core element in overcoming crises and achieving development objectives.

4. He had taken up the position of Interim Prime Minister of Libya at a time when four decades of dictatorial rule had created a non-inclusive society characterized by fragility, conflict and violence. The interim Government's understanding of the importance of all members of society had resulted in a reasonable level of peace and stability and the temporary unification of the people. Like other States in similar situations, Libya had wanted and needed help in identifying risks and developing solutions, but had at times been suspicious of those who were offering assistance. His country's unique culture and lack of democratic institutions and traditions, in addition to the specific circumstances that had led to the uprising, had meant that a one-size-fits-all approach was not appropriate.

5. The goal of his interim Government had been to hold the first democratic parliamentary elections in nearly 50 years while preserving the unity of the nation. The situation had been precarious in the aftermath of the uprising which, though initially peaceful, had become bloody. The 16,000 criminals that had been armed and released by the former regime had threatened the stability of the country, and the legacy of ethnic and regional conflicts resulting from the former leader's divide-and-rule tactics had been exacerbated by well-funded counter-revolutionary forces determined to sabotage the democratization process. The situation had been further compounded by rampant nepotism and corruption within State institutions, a virtually non-existent judicial system and the unreliability of the armed forces, police and intelligence services. Many people had been in favour of a democratic process but had feared that it would fail, while others had been angered by the social marginalization, economic deprivation or lack of opportunities they faced, and had been mistrustful of the central Government.

6. However, the nation had come together and, with support from the United Nations and other partners, elections had been held in a safe, free and transparent environment within the agreed time frame of just over

seven months. To achieve that goal during such challenging times, the interim Government had had to manage the high expectations of the people, set realistic objectives, identify priorities, remain focused and work with all parties concerned to rally the entire country around the common goal. To win the moral and political trust of the people, it had acted on its conviction that leaders must respect the rights and aspirations of all members of society, and that hope, humility, humanity and a sense of humour were keys to effective leadership. Staff had been recruited from all regions and efforts had been made to resolve conflicts across the country. Economic measures had been introduced to address market issues and private sector concerns as well as the dire financial circumstances in which many families had found themselves.

7. Since highly centralized governance had been a cause of the conflict, the interim Government had drafted a law to accord greater responsibility to provincial and municipal authorities. Unfortunately, the implementation of that law had been delayed. A national reconciliation body had been established, reintegration and development programmes for former combatants and the families of those who had died in the war had been introduced, and all members of the armed forces and the police continued to be employed. Despite those measures, Libya still faced multi-dimensional security challenges and would benefit from assistance provided by honest brokers who understood the complexity of the issue.

8. There were a number of general lessons that could be learned from the Libyan experience. First, institutions needed legitimacy in order to bring society together. That legitimacy must be earned through popular support and trust, which in turn could only be achieved through transparency. Every sector of the population must feel that the institutions understood, and were making efforts to address, their needs. Once a good relationship between the State and the population had been established, they could motivate one another and work together to continue to further develop those bonds and build a shared society.

9. External forces could either help or hinder that process. The international community had a critical role to play in preventing external forces from undermining the shared society for their own purposes. However, even well-intentioned efforts of the international community could have a negative impact, as States had their own agendas and often proved unwilling to take into account the experience, concerns and aspirations of those they were trying to assist. The international community and development agencies should be sensitive and responsive to each situation and those affected by it, and should listen to the people and ensure that leaders were held accountable.

10. There were other specific lessons learned from the Libyan experience that could be useful to intergovernmental agencies. Technical mechanisms or money alone were not sufficient to build peace; solutions were to be found at the intersection of political and economic processes and must be rooted in a thorough understanding of the socio-political environment of the country, constructive dialogue, national reconciliation and the establishment of an inclusive society. It was also important to be aware that even after a reasonable level of peace and stability had been achieved, a country could experience another bout of violence that would worsen the security situation. The establishment of peaceful, inclusive societies was a long process requiring resources and expertise for appropriate planning, implementation, follow-up, evaluation and development of corrective actions. Therefore, the role of the international community and development agencies must not only be to facilitate national dialogue and transition, but also to ensure that the desired outcomes were achieved and to assist States in overcoming implementation challenges.

11. The outcome of the third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa would largely determine whether sufficient resources would be made available for the implementation of the sustainable development goals. Those resources should cover not only aid delivery but also the implementation of a fair and equitable global economic system that would ensure that the wealth of developing countries was not drained by practices such as unfair pricing and profit-shifting. It was encouraging that the General Assembly, the most inclusive intergovernmental body in the world, had already been able to make some progress on the critical issues of the sustainable development goals and financing for development. The concerns and interests of all States must be heard and taken into account at the global level, just as inclusive participation was essential at the national level.

12. To reach agreement at the national level, the interim Government of Libya had recognized, first, that if problems could not be resolved immediately, it was

important to at least establish mechanisms for further work on them. Second, parties should focus less on what they wished others to do and more on what they could to do to enable an agreement to be reached. Third, in the case of disagreement, parties should make a sincere effort to understand each other's point of view and needs.

13. **Mr. Chowdhury** (President, Inter-Parliamentary Union), panellist, said that stronger and more effective institutions would be needed to ensure the success of the post-2015 agenda and, in particular, the sustainable development goals. While many institutions would be involved in overcoming the formidable challenge of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development — the economic, the social and the cultural — and all of the goals into coherent policy action, his remarks would focus specifically on the role of parliaments.

14. Consideration of the new transformative agenda did not concern only a set of goals but also the institutions that would be responsible for realizing those goals. The legislative and executive branches of Government must be able to forge a partnership. Parliaments must be fit for purpose: effective, capable and able to deliver. Business as usual was not a viable option; institutional transformation would require thinking outside the box.

15. While the sustainable development goals had been universally agreed, there was a lack of shared vision with respect to their implementation. The political environment in some countries was highly polarized along party or ideological lines, and weaknesses in many political systems had allowed particular interest groups to dominate political agendas at the expense of the common good. For example, reallocating the $5 billion paid out every year in fossil fuel subsidies to investment in renewable energy would bring substantial benefits to the economy, the environment and communities. Furthermore, since elections were held every few years, Governments tended to work on establishing their political bases rather than focusing on policy coherence and continuity.

16. A related issue was the lack of continuity resulting from the short terms of office of parliamentarians. The Inter-Parliamentary Union was therefore calling on parliaments to evaluate their internal processes in order to identify ways to institutionalize the sustainable development goals. The establishment of a national structure to oversee the integration of the goals into national development plans could serve to remind parliaments that the goals required consistent and integrated actions and would also serve as a means of overcoming the silo approach taken by many parliaments. Such a body could take the form of a special committee, a caucus or a special advisory group, depending on the structure of each particular parliament.

17. The most important way to ensure policy coherence at the national level was for parliaments to be involved more systematically and methodically in the design and review of national sustainable development plans. Those plans should be developed with the highest possible levels of public consultation and ownership, as the exclusion of certain sectors of society would result in biased policies. For example, poverty would not be eradicated unless the poor were empowered and directly involved in the shaping of national development plans. Therefore, all parliaments must be inclusive and representative of the electorate. Gender equality in parliaments was also a key priority for the Inter-Parliamentary Union in that regard.

18. The current year was a significant one for United Nations processes related to the analytical aspect of policy integration. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 had been adopted in March 2015, and the third International Conference on Financing for Development, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 and the twenty-first United Nations Climate Change Conference would take place later in 2015. Those separate processes should generate interlocking and mutually reinforcing results, as their coherence, convergence and integration were necessary for policy coherence.

19. The effectiveness of national sustainable development policies would largely depend on a supportive and enabling global environment. There was a need for appropriate economic, financial and trade governance at the global level to support legislative and regulatory reforms at the national level. As an example, it would be useless for parliaments to increase domestic taxes in order to generate resources for development if the international community were not able to strengthen the international tax regime in such a way as to prevent tax avoidance by large multinational corporations. Furthermore, parliamentarians should have access to high-quality, independent analyses and data that would

inform the legislative and oversight processes concerning the sustainable development goals, particularly since the 17 goals were expected to be accompanied by 169 targets and a large number of indicators.

20. The need to strengthen and build institutions to promote policy integration in the post-2015 era applied to parliaments in both developing and developed countries, in varying degrees. The Inter-Parliamentary Union was doing its part to address capacity needs and provide guidance on the role of parliaments. However, it would need support from Governments and the United Nations system in order to truly make a difference.

21. **Ms. Bethel** (Director and Chief Executive Officer, National Insurance Board of the Bahamas, and Vice-Chair, United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration), panellist, said that government agencies must adopt strategies, programmes and projects that included the three dimensions of sustainable development simultaneously and took account of their inherent complexities and interdependencies. The sustainable development goals framework called for an unprecedented level of policy integration, as it was cross-cutting in nature and most of the goals required some degree of common effort and cooperation among governmental structures.

22. Decision-making on matters related to sustainable development involved a complex array of jurisdictions, multiple social and economic priorities, varying stakeholder interests, complex scientific knowledge and international considerations. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration had found that institutional constraints to policy integration typically included overly hierarchical structures, lack of a common strategic policy direction, sectoral self-interest and complicated division of labour. Those structural challenges could be compounded by inadequate mechanisms for allocating resources for cross-cutting issues and ensuring shared accountability for shared responsibilities. Disincentives to policy integration among public servants further included a lack of skills, perceived loss of power or authority, competition for resources, and corruption.

23. The purpose of policy integration should be to ensure effective policymaking within sectors and also convince sectoral actors to explore the benefits of cross-sectoral cooperation. Policy integration efforts comprised both structural and behavioural approaches. The behavioural approach consisted in providing a platform to promote a culture of sharing, for example, data and resources, and reducing the silo-type mindset of public officials. A structural approach consisted in redefining agency functions, for example, between central and local governments and/or with a lead coordinating agency tasked with reducing fragmentation through a review of programmes.

24. Policy integration efforts were more likely to succeed when there were clear goals uniting experts, the public and decision makers and top-level leadership, in combination with bottom-up support from civil society. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration had identified a number of specific ways of supporting policy integration beyond institutional realignment, including a "cascading strategy" in which an institution identified strategic objectives from which key performance indicators were established for each level of administration, with subordinate objectives defined for each individual agency.

25. Developing clear goals, performance indicators and standards had been proven to help institutions achieve clearer strategic direction, which in turn supported policy integration across levels. Other methods included enforcement of aggregate fiscal discipline, interoperability of systems and data, and engagement of national and local governments in policy processes. Bringing local governments into the picture of sustainable development goals implementation was vital not only to foster coherence and synchronization across levels of administration but also because local governments had an inherent advantage in policy integration owing to the smaller number of actors involved and greater overlap of functions. Beyond making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, such involvement might also help to counter the perception that the sustainable development goals were simply an initiative of the central Government.

26. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration reiterated the widely held view that national and local contexts really mattered. For effective policy integration in pursuit of the sustainable development goals, it was important to consider a country's specific sustainable development conditions. Promoting local ownership of locally relevant goals and targets was critical if the sustainable development goals were to be meaningful to people and lead to

commitment and action. A better sense was needed of how policy would play out across different regions and in different types of countries, for example least developed countries and countries emerging from conflict, and what sequencing of reforms may be implied given different resources, capacities and governance systems.

27. She was pleased to see the issue of policy integration being discussed at the international level. Often there were a number of multilateral agencies doing very good work to improve governance at the national level, but a lack of coordination between them could leave countries with a heavy reporting burden that could in fact hinder their efforts. Ensuring that only one or two agencies could seek similar information from Governments would be enormously helpful to jurisdictions that did not have the resources to respond to similar requests from multiple agencies.

28. **Mr. Gass** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), panellist, said that the transition to a new agenda centred on the sustainable development goals called for a paradigm shift owing to the scope and depth of the agenda and the broad-based mobilization required at all levels of action. As the goals encompassed areas that transcended the boundaries of established policy fields, institutions and actors, their implementation would require an integrated and coherent vision supported by concerted action and coherent policies from a broad range of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders. Success would depend not only on a new mindset but also on an in-depth resetting and retooling of development and business practices in order to respond to, and manage the demands of, a broader and more integrated agenda.

29. Institutions were central to that process; they were key enablers of development as long as they were effective, but became major constraints if they failed to take current and emerging needs into account. The paradigm shift must therefore necessarily begin from within the institutions. The cross-cutting and universal nature of the new agenda, while being important, would make implementation by institutions challenging, particularly when combined with the commitment to leave no one behind.

30. The ambitious goals contained in the agenda would probably necessitate a shift from exclusive to inclusive implementation, which would involve seeking out new actors that could be empowered to further the agenda. While such a change would be a major challenge for institutions accustomed to working within mandates and with specific actors, meeting all of the needs and aspirations covered by the sustainable development goals would be impossible unless institutions were able to make use of the resources and ambition of every available actor.

31. Policy-development and service-delivery processes that mobilized civil society, the private sector and other non-State actors must be established and managed at the national and subnational levels. Existing systems, modalities and mandates would have to be restructured in order to enable government departments and agencies that traditionally worked in silos to become more collaborative. Building the capacity of governmental agencies to manage multi-stakeholder engagement in problem-solving would be critical, as would equipping outside stakeholders to work with those agencies. Transformational leadership would be essential in creating a culture of change and innovation, but processes, structures and individuals able to spur, sustain and support innovation and adaptation in the long term would also be required.

32. Institutional change would also be required at the regional and global levels in order to remove existing barriers to integrated policymaking. In that regard, it was encouraging that the Inter-Parliamentary Union had taken the lead in asking parliaments to consider the implications of the sustainable development goals. Reform would be required at all levels to remove systemic obstacles to a more balanced approach to sustainable development. That would require rebalancing the relations between markets, States, societies and other users of natural resources.

33. At the regional level, institutional integration would help forge the regional approaches to shared challenges and transboundary concerns that would be essential in order to generate economies of scale and minimize policy trade-offs. At the global level, institutional reform would promote greater coherence in the implementation of economic, social and environmental agendas, thereby ensuring that progress on one of those dimensions did not come at the expense of the others. New forms of more flexible and horizontal governance, such as multi-stakeholder partnerships, networks and transnational networked governance, had already emerged, particularly in the context of climate governance. However, the

effectiveness and legitimacy of such approaches had not yet been determined.

34. The United Nations system would also need to adapt and become fit for purpose. Stakeholders participating in the first phase of the dialogue on the post-2015 development agenda had stressed the need for United Nations entities to come up with a more integrated and tailored response to the specific needs and priorities of States. The second phase of the dialogue, which would begin after the Sustainable Development Summit, would include an examination of the details of the proposals made in the first phase, including the idea of transforming the quadrennial comprehensive policy review into a strategic tool for system-wide policy direction and accountability.

35. In conclusion, while a large number of goals and targets could be used to determine whether implementation of the sustainable development agenda had been successful, to gauge whether institutions were becoming fit for purpose, it would be important to determine simply whether their actions were strengthening the relationship between duty bearers and rights holders; and whether anyone was being left behind.

36. **The President** said that the international community had made every effort to manage high expectations in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, in a context where many individuals lacked hope, education and opportunities. Endurance, resources and expertise were essential to future action, and the Council must ensure that the economy, the environment and communities benefited from its work. Parliamentarians must review and take ownership of national sustainable development policies. Lack of skills, competition for resources and corruption would hinder the implementation of the agenda. Experts, decision makers and the public must be united in such implementation, to which competitiveness and ambition were essential.

Interactive discussion

37. **Ms. Mxakato-Diseko** (South Africa) said that the global financial and economic order must be taken into account in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Coordination rather than competition among United Nations system organizations was needed, and the agenda must be supported by global rules. In South Africa, where the principle of separation of powers was enshrined in the Constitution, the role of parliament in the implementation of the sustainable development goals would be to scrutinize the national plans drafted by the executive rather than to design such plans itself. The roles of Government, parliament and civil society must be clearly delineated. Public officials would ultimately implement the goals and must be held accountable by parliaments and other entities.

38. In Africa, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had resulted in a decade of gruelling reforms requiring even ministers to submit performance agreements and to be held accountable for reaching specific targets. Public officials would not accept further reform for the implementation of the sustainable development goals if they felt that it would undermine the successes of the MDGs. The language used in discussions regarding the sustainable development goals must not imply that the implementation of those goals was an impossible task. It should take into account the strengths and weaknesses of States without giving the impression that they must abandon their current course. States had been instructed to outsource service delivery during the implementation of the MDGs and had only recently rebuilt their capacities, as shown by the response to the Ebola epidemic.

39. National circumstances and political cultures should be taken into account in the implementation of the sustainable development goals, and every effort should be made to avoid the establishment of an industry that competed with Governments and the poor rather than build on existing achievements. In Africa, development was not an abstract concept but the key to improving people's lives, and the Council had an important role to play in providing guidance to Governments on that continent. The international community must build on the successes of the MDGs in its quest to implement the sustainable development agenda. The African Union, the Southern African Development Community and other African regional coordination mechanisms could not be expected to abandon their work in the field of integration and embark on wholly new reforms with a view to implementing that agenda.

40. **The President** requested further information on the ways in which a balance between shared burdens and shared benefits could be struck; on how the sustainable development goals could be translated into

operational reality; and on key performance indicators for public administration.

41. **Mr. El-Keib** (former Interim Prime Minister of Libya and Member of Club de Madrid) said that the aspirations of African countries, many of which faced problems but had much to offer the rest of the world, were being addressed through the African Union. Although some developed countries felt that African States had little to contribute and should be left to solve their problems alone, development was a matter for the international community as a whole. All countries should therefore treat each other with consideration and help each other to share in the benefits of cooperative endeavours.

42. **Mr. Chowdhury** (President, Inter-Parliamentary Union) said that the separation of powers was an important principle, but a cross-sectoral, complementary strategic partnership between the legislative and executive branches was required rather than a compartmentalized approach based on silos. In many Constitutions, the role of parliament comprised oversight, appropriation of resources and alignment of national legislation and policy with international commitments. Parliamentarians must therefore be involved not only in overseeing but also in designing the post-2015 development agenda. Changes in mindset were required to ensure that parliamentarians could exercise their functions effectively. Although the oversight role of parliamentarians made tension between the executive and legislative branches inevitable, a new international framework was needed to ensure that all components worked together to achieve the best results.

43. With regard to translating the sustainable development goals into operational reality, the theme of the 132nd Assembly of the International Parliamentary Union, held in Hanoi in March 2015, had been "Turning words into action". Parliaments themselves could not implement the sustainable development goals, but they could help Governments to do so. They must be representative in order to ensure inclusive policies and leave no one behind, and they must operate in an optimal environment. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had estimated that $100 billion in tax revenue was lost to developing countries every year, while the infrastructure financing gap in Africa was $93 billion.

44. If parliaments were viewed as strategic partners, more would be achieved during the implementation of the sustainable development goals than during the implementation of the MDGs, when parliamentarians did not become involved until after 2005. Fortunately, parliaments had been involved in the sustainable development goals from the start, thereby ensuring that those goals were more inclusive than the MDGs. The deepening relationship between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union would be instrumental in the achievement the sustainable development goals.

45. **Ms. Bethel** (Director and Chief Executive Officer, National Insurance Board of the Bahamas, and Vice-Chair, United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration) said that performance indicators were essential to ensure that administrations met the expectations of stakeholders. They should help to reduce delays in the provision of government services and enable more efficient interaction between citizens and Governments. Databases and processes should be integrated and information should be shared. In the business environment, processing times for permit applications should be reduced. Public administrations were seeking a delivery mechanism for the sustainable development goals. The good practices that had emerged from the implementation of the MDGs should not be abandoned.

46. The need to achieve the sustainable development goals afforded such administrations an opportunity to become more flexible, coordinated and integrated, while establishing the predictable environment expected by stakeholders. Although some countries had more elaborate public administration systems than others, all shared the view that no one should be left behind. Each administration would need to establish a transparent, inclusive and responsive environment, taking into account specific national characteristics, in order to offer citizens optimal opportunities in a sustainable way while preserving the three dimensions of the sustainable development goals. Small States would find such a transition particularly challenging.

47. **Ms. Kage** (Germany) recalled that while the international community was planning for the next 15 years, elected politicians generally worked within four- to five-year time frames. She asked how that difference in administrative timelines could be bridged in order to ensure that subsequent administrations embraced the sustainable development goals.

48. **Mr. Chowdhury** (President, Inter-Parliamentary Union), said that achieving cross-party consensus and integrating the sustainable development goals within national development plans would allow the focus to remain on the goals, regardless of election results, and would prevent them from becoming the subject of internal political disputes.

49. **The President** sought clarification as to the best way to communicate the validity of the sustainable development goals to those to whom they were intended; and as to the importance of policy integration at the international and global levels to ensure simplicity and greater effectiveness.

50. **Mr. Gass** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that different methods were required to communicate the goals, targets and their benefits to different people. To ensure relevant national dialogue and government and public-institution accountability, individuals should be made aware of the targets that corresponded to their needs and aspirations.

51. He agreed that national circumstances and political cultures should be taken into account in the implementation of the sustainable development goals. Indeed, it was perhaps a positive development that the sustainable development goals were not accompanied by an international implementation plan. As such, dialogue at the national level, which was already taking place in some countries, was the necessary next step. Engagement with regional groups should also be discussed at the national level.

52. The work of the Africa Group in keeping the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda on track demonstrated the importance of such engagement. Furthermore, if the international community wished to achieve that ambitious set of goals, non-State actors present in the territory and ready to assist at the national level should be mobilized. Because there were no set rules on how the agenda was to be implemented, each country was responsible for choosing its own path. However, States should be aware that what had been a strength in the implementation of the MDGs, namely the capacity to coordinate and implement a log frame, could prove to be a weakness in the implementation of a plan as broad as the sustainable development agenda. The international community needed to harness the inherent integrated energy of the sustainable development goals. Accordingly, instead of attributing each goal to a specific institution or restructuring the institutional framework, the various administrative branches should work collectively towards each of the goals.

53. Technical support and task teams, which made use of all the available expertise from the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, had been doing their utmost to provide their services throughout the post-2015 development agenda negotiation process. For the implementation of that agenda, Member States should ask what steps they needed to take in order to strengthen the capacity of public administration to serve rights holders and the capacity of rights holders to understand and request those services. They should also initiate their actions and planning by first reflecting on which groups were the most vulnerable. They had to assess the reasons for that vulnerability, the threats they faced and how those threats could be mitigated.

54. **Mr. Chowdhury** (President, Inter-Parliamentary Union) said that the existence of separate committees for the sustainable development goals at parliamentary level was tantamount to recognition of the failure to internalize the goals at the State level. National action and ownership of the goals were needed. Governments should hold public hearings to help them in the development of their implementation plans and to ensure that the people participated in the process. Though many stakeholders would be involved, including the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations, parliaments had a distinct role to play in that they were constitutionally mandated to appropriate funds, pass finance bills, and legislate on such matters. A harmonized structure at both the national and the international levels would enable the international community to focus on the goal of leaving no one behind.

55. **Ms. Bethel** (Director and Chief Executive Officer, National Insurance Board of the Bahamas, and Vice-Chair, United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration) said that public administration was evolving. Though the task of starting anew could be daunting, the sustainable development goals would help the international community to respond to the public's changing expectations and needs, thereby ensuring that no one was left behind. The success of public administration depended on cooperation with the political leadership. Inclusiveness and the provision

of opportunities for engagement were also important, including raising public awareness during the early stages of implementation.

56. Moreover, the roles of the political leaders and administrators would have to be clarified in order to avoid potential confusion. A national debate would help to raise awareness of achievements at the national level, which would in turn facilitate implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

57. She hoped that international agencies, a number of which had already began to work in some form on various aspects of the sustainable development goals, would engage more cooperatively. Some agencies sometimes requested small countries to produce information and sanctioned them if they failed to do so within a specific time frame. That was not the ideal way forward. The international community had to be more pragmatic with regard to its expectations. International cooperation was, therefore, an imperative. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration would be exploring more deeply the transition to and transformational strategies associated with the implementation of the sustainable development goals, which would allow it to identify the best practices to help countries move forward.

58. *Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea) took the Chair.*

Closing of the high-level segment

Closing remarks by the Secretary-General

59. **The Secretary-General** said that the world had made much progress over the past decade and a half, extreme poverty and child mortality rates had been cut by more than half, more girls were in school and fewer people were dying of killer diseases. Those critical advances had not happened on their own; they had required strong financial support, political leadership, and the enormous efforts of people themselves – from the leadership of Governments to the actions and hard work of the poorest villager.

60. Although the international community was already working to establish a new development agenda for the coming 15 years, there was still a long way to go. Too many still suffered from chronic undernutrition. Preventable diseases continued to be the top killers of children under five years of age. At the same time, the broader picture of progress largely excluded women, those at the lowest rungs of the economic ladder, and those discriminated against because of age, disability or ethnicity.

61. Meanwhile, inequality was growing, climate change was threatening the planet, and conflicts were derailing hard-won progress. The MDGs had shown what was possible when the international community came together around common goals. The Economic and Social Council had demonstrated the value of bringing the United Nations system together to support their implementation. It had served as the hub for Member States and others to review progress, linking the national, regional and global levels.

62. The Partnerships Forum had helped to focus efforts and enhance effectiveness, which was critical for delivering on the post-2015 development agenda. That event marked the end of the review of the MDGs in the Council, and also laid the foundation for the transition to the sustainable development goals — an ambitious and universal agenda.

63. On the eve of the start of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa, he wanted to underscore the importance of achieving an ambitious agreement. By doing so, the international community could not only lay a framework for financing, but indeed a framework for success ahead of the adoption of the sustainable development goals in New York in September 2015. Governments would also be making good on their commitment to approve a universal, meaningful climate agreement in Paris in December 2015.

64. He urged all parties to overcome differences and find a common pathway starting from Addis Ababa and leading to the end of poverty and a sustainable world for all. Going forward, the high-level political forum on sustainable development — under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly — would play a central role in reviewing the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Discussions within the Council and the forum had helped to outline how the forum could organize its work, keep track of progress and bolster implementation. Success would depend on a firm political will to work together.

65. The Council was now stronger and should fully use its power to spur integration and help mobilize a range of actors and the United Nations system. The United Nations development system had to be made fit to deliver the support needed. The Council had already

launched that dialogue, and he looked forward to a successful outcome of those deliberations.

66. Lastly, he wished to commend the outgoing President of the Council, Mr. Sajdik, and the Bureau for their strong and enlightened leadership over the last 18 months. He knew Mr. Sajdik had moved on to new challenges, but wished to acknowledge that he had brought the Council a long way towards a smooth transition to the ambitious tasks ahead. He sincerely hoped that under the leadership of its incoming President, Mr. Oh Joon, the Council would make a great contribution to humanity by helping to achieve the sustainable development goals and to reach the universal and ambitious climate change agreement in December.

Closing remarks by the President

67. **The President** said that the high-level segment and the high-level political forum had offered valuable policy guidance for the transition from the MDGs to the post-2015 development agenda. That transition would provide an opportunity to advance prosperity for people and to preserve the planet. Member States should be ready to meet the full requirements of the new agenda. Through the Council, they had a vehicle to enable such a transition.

68. The Council should work to promote policy integration and reduce inequalities. It was now equipped to fulfil its role as the principal body for the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The Council had advanced ownership, engagement, implementation, follow-up and review at the global level, and its system had become an interlocking framework connecting the high-level political forum, functional and regional commissions, expert bodies and specialized agencies. That system should be used in its entirety to support implementation, monitoring and review of the new agenda. In the post-2015 era, the international community should mobilize its resources, energy and vision to confront the challenges that faced it.

69. He declared closed the high-level segment of the 2015 session of the Economic and Social Council.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.